

# Guide to Creating a Student Fee Initiative at UC Davis

## INTRODUCTION

This document is intended to serve as a resource guide for students who are interested in initiating a compulsory campus-based student fee. This guide is not a University policy.

A compulsory campus-based student fee is a fee levied at individual campuses that must be paid by all registered students to whom the fee applies. The fee may be used to fund student-related services, programs, and facilities. All fee initiatives must adhere to the following:

- University of California Policies Applying to Campus Activities, Organizations, and Students <http://policy.ucop.edu/doc/2710528/PACAOS-80>
- UC Davis Policy and Procedure, Chapter 280, Student Affairs, Section 15, Compulsory Campus-Based Student Fees and Referendum Elections
- ASUCD policies including the Constitution, Bylaws and Elections codes
- UC Davis Graduate Student Association Bylaws, Article 2, Section 2.5 Ballot Measures

In most circumstances, compulsory campus-based student fees are established, increased, or renewed following a student vote. **Please note:** Compulsory Campus- Based Student Fees, 84.20 states – *All student referendum are advisory to the Chancellor and, conditional on the Chancellor’s recommendation, are subject to final approval by the President under the authority delegated to the President by the Regents.* In addition, new campus based fees are carefully reviewed and unless all relevant policies are followed, the University will be very reluctant to approve.

This guide will help students navigate the approval process and provide templates to assist in creating a referendum. Included as part of this guide are:

- I. Timeline
- II. Things to include as part of the Ballot Language
- III. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

## **I. TIMELINE**

It is recommended that proposed fee initiatives follow the appropriate timelines to ensure that the various entities involved in the approval process have sufficient time to review the proposal and address any concerns.

### **Proposal Development Phase**

Create a written proposal and develop ballot languages. To gain feedback on your proposal you are encouraged to consult with:

- Associate Vice Chancellor – Student Life
- Associate Vice Chancellor – Student Affairs, Divisional Resources
- ASUCD Business Manager  
Council on Student Affairs and Fees - COSAF (the generally recognized student committee for Fee Oversight referenced throughout this document)

Final language must be submitted to the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, who will work with the Budget Office, Campus Counsel, and UCOP Student Affairs for review to ensure that the procedures and criteria are consistent with the law and university policy.

Please send your proposal with:

- A cover letter that outlines your goals
- Your contact information
- Proposed title of the fee initiative
- Ballot language
- A recommended sunset clause (end date)
- 10 year budget of program/service with proceeds of the fee

Follow up with the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs to see if ballot language has been reviewed by the Budget Office, Campus Counsel, and UCOP Student Affairs.

### **Fall Quarter - Approval to Place on Ballot Phase**

This is a critical quarter for gaining approval to be able to put your initiative out for a student vote.

#### Action Steps:

1. Referendum sponsors will meet with Associate Vice for Student Affairs, Student Life – Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Divisional Resources and ASUCD Business Manager to review draft language of the ballot, discuss proposal and review next steps in the process. The ASUCD Business Manager will alert the ASUCD Elections Committee of the proposed referendum.

2. Referendum sponsors will present COSAF with a draft of the ballot language and accompanying materials in order to collect comments and possible edits to ballot language.
3. Referendum sponsors will submit a draft of the referendum and all ballot language to the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs and Campus Diversity, and UC Davis Campus Counsel for review and certification.
4. Student Affairs will forward the ballot language and accompanying materials to the Office of the President for review.
5. The Office Student Affairs will request enrollment data from the Registrar's Office to determine the required number of students in the voting pool and petition of signatures.
6. Petition of Signatures: Once the ballot language is approved by UCOP, referendum sponsors will conduct a petition for signatures by the student body. (See Article V, Section 1 of the ASUCD Constitution. Signatures will be collected from *"at least 8% of undergraduate students and/or at least 8% of graduate students for fees affecting each respective student bodies."*)  
ASUCD Elections Committee will meet with referendum sponsors to provide detailed instructions, materials, and deadlines for conducting the signature petition.  
Sponsors must provide all petitioned students with ballot language and accompanying materials.  
Sponsors will work with ASUCD Elections Committee to confirm petition signatures are valid. Only signatures of registered UC Davis students will be considered valid.
7. After meeting the necessary requirements for approval by petition, referendum sponsors will submit all documents to the Chairs of the Council of Student Affairs and Fees (COSAF) to request COSAF's review and endorsement. The Chairs of COSAF must add it to the COSAF agenda for review and will issue the Council's endorsement and/or comments in writing to the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs and Campus Diversity.
8. The Vice Chancellor, Student Affairs and Campus Diversity will review and endorse as appropriate and submit a letter to the Chancellor with a recommendation whether to authorize the initiative.
9. Once received, submit the Chancellor's approval of the ballot and its accompanying documents to the ASUCD Elections Commissioner.

### **Winter Quarter: Vote**

1. The referendum will be included as a Ballot Measure in the Winter Elections ballot that takes place in February of Winter Quarter. If voter turnout for ASUCD Winter Elections does not reach at least twenty percent (20%) of the eligible voting population as provided by the Registrar's office, the fees proposed in the Ballot Measure shall be null and void. Ballot Measures must be approved by the 60% affirmative vote as specified in the ASUCD Constitution.
2. If the Ballot Measure passes, the Office for the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs and Campus Diversity shall be responsible for sending the ballot language, certifying

documentation, and any other supporting documents to the Chancellor and the Budget Office, who will in turn submit the fee initiative to the UC Office of the President for review and approval. If appropriate, the Office of the President will obtain approval by the Regents.

\*For any ASUCD special elections, plan for a minimum ten week approval process and use the timeline above as a rubric.

## II. THINGS TO INCLUDE AS PART OF THE BALLOT LANGUAGE

Ballot language for the proposed fee initiative must be impartial and include the following information:

- Sponsoring organization
- Purpose of fee
- Amount of fee
- Effective date of fee (must provide a minimum of 30 days)
- Which quarter the fees will be charged
- Who will pay the fee (undergraduates, graduates, professional, or all)
- Wording on ballot
- Voting procedure
- Information on how much of the fee will go to return to aid. UCOP requires a minimum of 25% of the total new fee or fee increase as appropriate (Policy on Compulsory Campus Based Student Fees 81.20)
- Information on how much of the fee will go toward the University of California Office of the President (UCOP) assessment to support UCOP
- A mechanism for an increase of the fee (CPI is recommended)
- Each proposed new compulsory campus-based fee, or proposed increase to or renewal of any existing fee (except as specified in [Section 83.00](#) of the *Policy on Compulsory Campus Based Student Fees*) must be voted on by students as a separate ballot measure in a student election. Exceptions to this requirement include where the proposed fees or fee increases or renewals strongly and clearly support a common student life, student services, or other programmatically related goal (see Section 84.14 of the *Policies on Compulsory Campus Based Student Fees* for more information).

When considering proposed fee initiatives requesting placement on the ballot, ASUCD, GSA, and SSFAAC will evaluate it on a content-neutral basis. Decisions will be based on the feasibility of the proposal and the following considerations:

- Who did you consult with to create the fee amount, guidelines and ballot language?
- Are you able to clearly articulate who will benefit from this fee?
- Are you sure the fee amount will be sufficient for your proposed initiative? For example, if you intend to fund salary for a full-time staff member, have you accounted for benefits and future increases? Also, how will you deal with the rising costs of goods and services

(i.e., adjusting for inflation to meet the needs of the program service, or building maintenance in the foreseeable future)?

- Does the referendum meet all of the necessary requirements, including return to aid?
- Is there a sound plan for administering the fee revenue should the initiative pass? If the fee revenue is not going to be administered by an existing campus entity, is the fee initiative accompanied by the creation of a body that would be able to successfully allocate the funds? Is there a set of guidelines that adequately outlines the structure and operation of this new entity?
- Is the proposed fee amount reasonable within the context of other student fees?
- Is there a “sunset clause” for the fee initiative? Does it specify whether it will be re-evaluated by the student body after a set number of years? If the fee is for a construction bond, does the ballot language specify when students will stop paying the fee?
- When considered within the overall framework of the university, is it reasonable to expect students to pay for the proposed service, program, building, etc.?
- Is the fee rounded to the nearest dollars? This helps reduce the administrative cost of reconciling the account.

### III. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

#### *What if I can't meet the deadlines or the recommended timeline for the referendum process?*

While the suggested timeline is recommended, all of the deadlines recommended allow for adequate time for the appropriate parties to approve the referendum. **No item will be placed on the ballot that has not received appropriate approval in writing from all of the required parties.** It is the responsibility of the person and/or group sponsoring the referendum to ensure that the process is moving forward in a timely fashion.

#### *What if the referendum is a combined graduate and undergraduate student fee initiative?*

If it is a combined referendum, you need both the GSA and ASUCD to approve of the referendum guidelines and ballot language (or receive petition signed by 8% of the undergraduate student body and 8% of the graduate student body). ASUCD and GSA shall determine whether the results of the balloting shall be combined or considered separately.

#### *How may we spend the fees?*

Particular programs and activities of a Registered Campus Organization funded from compulsory campus-based student fees shall be open to participation by the entire campus community. In addition, all expenditures relating to particular programs and activities of a Registered Campus Organization (whether the program or activity takes place on- or off-campus) that are funded from such fees must be under the direct control of University of California students. (See Section 86.11, and also [Section 70.20](#) of the *Policies Applying to Campus Activities, Organizations, and Students*). Support for a Registered Campus Organization or any student group other than a student government from compulsory campus-based student fees must be in the form of a reallocation from student government or other appropriate campus entity to the Registered Campus Organization or other student group. All such reallocations must be made consistent with the requirements for viewpoint- neutral funding set forth in [Section 86.20](#) and [86.30](#) of the *Policies Applying to Campus Activities, Organizations, and Students*. (See also [Section 70.81](#) of the *Policies Applying to Campus Activities, Organizations, and Students*)

#### *Can students get a refund if they don't agree with the fee?*

Presently, there is no pro rata refund of compulsory student fees mechanism established at UC Davis. Establishment of such a refund mechanism is not required either as a matter of University policy or the law. This applies to all current and proposed fees. (See Section 86. 13 and also [Section 70.83](#) of the *Policies Applying to Campus Activities, Organizations, and Students*.)

#### *Why do we have to return at minimum 25% of the fee to aid?*

Beginning April 14, 2006, any compulsory campus-based student fee approved as either a new

fee or an increase to an existing fee shall provide for fee revenue for local need-based financial aid ("return-to-aid") to be set aside in an amount equal to at least 25% of the total new fee or fee increase as appropriate. This provision provides for financial aid packages issued to students with financial need to help cover the additional cost of the fees. To fully cover the cost of the increase, the return to aid percent should equal the Pell Grant Participation rate. It is recommended you consult the Financial Aid Office before making your final decision. Also, see Section 81.20 of the *Policies Applying to Campus Activities, Organizations, and Students* for more information.

### ***What are the campaign rules?***

Make sure you are briefed on all of the elections rules regarding fee initiatives as established by ASUCD, GSA, and LSA when applicable. Information may be found in the ASUCD Elections Code and GSA Bylaws, which are located on their respective websites ([www.asucd.ucdavis.edu](http://www.asucd.ucdavis.edu) and [www.gsa.ucdavis.edu](http://www.gsa.ucdavis.edu)).

### ***Can departments sponsor my campaign?***

Departments, including ASUCD and GSA, may allocate funds toward a campaign as long as there are equal amounts set aside to produce printed material against the fee initiative. The amount of the funds shall be limited to the cost to printed material. Allocations of funds are determined by the ASUCD and/or GSA and shall be administered through the ASUCD Business Office.

### ***Are there additional requirements for new fee-funded buildings and major renovations?***

The actual language of any ballot measure that is intended to fund either construction of a new building or other facility, or major renovation of an existing building or other facility, explicitly state: (1) whether the fee will be continued following retirement of the original debt on the new construction or major renovation, and (2) if the fee is to be continued, the purpose or purposes for which the fee will be used, as well as the mechanism that will be used to determine the level at which the fee will be set, following retirement of the original debt (please note that, as a general principle, campuses are encouraged to continue such fees at an appropriately adjusted level following retirement of the original debt, to provide for the actual costs associated with long-term building or other facility maintenance needs). Referenda must be initiated only from the time that students can actually benefit from and use the new or renovated building or other facility, except as specified immediately below. All student referendum results are advisory to the Chancellor and, conditional on the Chancellor's recommendation, are subject to final approval by the President under the authority delegated to the President by The Regents. We recommend you consult with the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs for any proposals for fee-funded building or major renovations to be sure you have acquired space allocation and have properly budgeted for all construction, renovation, and maintenance costs. See Section 84.15 of the *Policies Applying to Campus Activities, Organizations, and Students* for more.

### ***How do we update an old fee?***

### ***Is there a way to see how the fees are used?***

Provide the links from BIA and the SSFAAC websites.